

[E. A. Jenkins]

Week No. 14

Item No. 21

Words 2400

[Moss:LL

Percent

Received

Accredited S241 - [?] DUP

FORM A Cirsumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St. Lincoln Neb.

DATE March 10, 1939 SUBJECT Amerian Folk stuff

1. Name and address of informant. E.A. Jenkins, 3901 So. 46th St.
2. Date and time of interview. March 10, 1939. 1:15 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.
3. Place of interview. Home of Informant.
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant. None.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you. None.

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6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. American type living room, excellently kept, well and comfortably furnished, with some very attractive pictures on walls, showing considerable taste in their selection and placing. Interior, generally speaking is warm and friendly, well lighted and cheerful. An average good class American dwelling suggesting its occupancy by both youth and age. House located in a sort of [draw?] and has several vacant lots behind it which have been landscaped and arranged very attractively, surroundings are average suburban dwellings and looks out over the open country beyond.

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St. Lincoln

DATE March 10, 1939 SUBJECT American Folk stuff

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Ed A. Jenkins, 3901 South 46th St.

1. Ancestry. Scotch Irish, Welsh

2. Place and date of birth. Fayette Co., Iowa, 1857

3. Family. Wife, 2 daughters at home

4. Place lived in, with dates. Fayette Iowa, 1867 to 1872

Furnas County, 1872 to 1887

(James County)

5. Education, with dates. Iowa grade school 1864 to 1872

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6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates. Pioneer farmer, laborer, stockman, cowboy, 1872 to 1887. Building contractor 1887 to 1930. Lincoln.

7. Special Skills and interests. Built hundreds of houses and business buildings. Building construction, dam constructions landscaping.

8. Community and religious activities. Protestant. Active in promoting and advocating kindness, honesty and harmony between all living things.

9. Description of informant. Tall(over six feet) rugged "rawboned" powerful build.

10. Other points gained in interview. In the 200 to 250 # class at one time. Snow white hair fairly heavy, eyes light blue, features a trifle rigid but normal anglo Saxon type, expressive face, ready voluntary talker, quite a philosopher, humorously inclined but rather forceful and direct. Seems very intelligent and alert, strong willed and suggests a leader type. Believes in kindness and friendliness. Quite a character.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St. Lincoln

DATE March 10, 1930 SUBJECT American Folk stuff

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Ewd. A. Jenkins, 3901 South 46th St. Lincoln.

Our homestead was located an Beaver Creek 30 miles west of Melrose stockade, known today as Orleans. I learned an early lesson there from the Indians. You know just about everyone that came to the frontier homestead settlements had a foolish and vicious idea that they wanted to kill an Indian. Just thought it would be smart and heroic. Because of this or partly so, 30 homesteaders were killed in [our?] country. Well the Indians of course, believed it was all right to kill any white to avenge a killing of their own kind. It didn't have to be the one who did the killing necessarily. One morning early 10 Indians and one squaw

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came up to our homestead log house and asked to get in. We had two men stopping with us by name of Johnson and Wilson. Now, I wouldn't say for sure, those Indians were out to kill and burn but we felt that was what they were up to. But when they came in and saw our line up of five or six grown men and boys with rifles, whatever they had in mind, they didn't get hostile. Mother was baking biscuits and frying buffalo meat and we asked the Indians to eat. They seemed to be surprised but [fell?] to and ate a hearty breakfast. They were very thoughtful and one of them had a silver dollar strung on a string. He gave this to my mother after that they returned [and?] several times and one day an ornery bunch of Sioux hunters showed up and I think they meant to massacre us but our friends the Pawnee squad 2 [hove?] in sight and between us the Sioux were glad to get out. And so I learned right then and there that kindness not only subdues wrath but it also wins kindness in return.

The white settlers were inclined to kill buffalo just for the fun of the thing. I saw one such fellow shoot down 8 buffalo and leave them lay. All this provoked the Indians, who looked on buffalo as part (the biggest part) of their living. An Indian is pretty nervous and his trick was to let some of the band attract the attention of a white man while he slipped around and shot the [man?] in the back. They would take the women and children off with them and mistreat the women. We found a white woman, wandering around naked and her body bruised and [cut?]. She had been ravished and left for dead. With some help of others we managed to help her to recovery. Her husband had been killed.

A man by the name of Abbott from Australia with his boy settled in the Beaver Valley above us. The Indians got him and the boy took to the timber but they chased him down and killed him. There was one experience out there that left its mark on me. Seated on a stone frozen to death, I found an Indian squaw. She had a blanket wrapped around and a small fur. When I moved her body there was her papoose frozen between her knees under the blanket where she had put it in a vain endeavor to keep it warm. The agonized expression frozen on the face of the squaw haunted me for many years.

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There was much to contend with out there, cold, heat, snow, grasshoppers, wolves, rattlesnakes and hostile Indians. But the general health was good and sickness rare. I noticed that meat would sort of ease over and keep a long while without spoiling. There wasn't the corruption and bacteria present, there is today. As the world grows old more corruption accumulates and disease with it. That comes from civilized human life.

These old houses right around us today occupied by a long string of humans, develop a kind of leprosy or unclean gasy, dusty atmosphere and polluted by moulding organic matter and vermin. What illness there was, was treated with a few home made remedies and seldom by a doctor. The doctors who came into a new country of hardships ordinarily were not much good or at least there were not doing so good where they were.

Out there we had a certain wild pumpkin growing. It produced little pumpkins but by digging down, one would find a big round root away under the ground. This root was as bitter as the bitterest gall but if boiled with sugar, it made a tonic which was excellent for colic, diarrhea and even was a good sedative. [Seneca?] root was another remedy used by many of the housewives.

Now young people didn't go into the frontier country so much and the older ones often migrated to a new raw country because they had a past, which they were glad to get away from. You'll find that today, but people are timid about weighing anchor and going into the unknown. They are frightened and uncertain because of the dreadful economic condition which exists today.

Well more about Indians. We had an Irish man neighbor, who happened to see a squad of Indians coming one day, he was scared and crawled under his bed in his sod house. The Indians meant business all right and crawled upon the soddy. He had a rifle and started shooting when they pushed the door in. He killed a Buck and the rest as usual got under cover after a while they tried to lasso the dead Indian with a [lariat?] and finally did from around the corner of the house. If an Indian ever surrendered to another Indian force or a

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4 white man he was never allowed to come back to his tribe. That was their custom. The Indians did not bury their dead around there. They wrapped them in blankets and placed the bodies on poles in the trees. We used to go out into the timber and shake down the bones.

One time a runner came by our place shouting 'the Indians are coming, thousands of them.' All through the night I lay awake and when Mother started snoring, I thought we were surrounded. But in the dawn it proved to be a few Mexicans with a herd of range feeder cattle.

We never hear much about how schools were started in pioneer days. Well the settlers around a certain district just got together and arranged to build a sod (usually) school house and find a teacher, who as a rule was a part educated son or daughter, of the community. If necessary they would take turns boarding the teacher and sometimes pay them \$15.00 a month. Every body was more or lose poor so in our district in James County as we called it we voted for a tax to be paid direct an personal property, since there was no real estate to tax at the time.

The Early church in James or Furnas County was organized by way of prayer meetings at settlers log or sod houses. We used to take the oxen and and go in the evening, sometimes seven or eight miles. Coming back we would go to sleep and the oxen would find their way home. Later a traveling minister came in and held Sunday Meetings, sometimes in the homes and then in school houses, finally in a newly built church.

One time we had a kind of 4th of July church picnic along the Beaver Creek. The minister was there. A herd of buffalo came along and we made a rush an them and caught a calf. The minister seemed to be in a playful mood 5 and he took the struggling protesting calf into the creek and baptised it 'in the name of the virgin Mary.'

We also had Literary and I helped write a Literary paper called 'Hit 'em and Run.'

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A singing school was also organized I think we just had four notes 'do' 'so'[n?]' 'do' with long meter, short meter, and common meter. In church it was the custom to sing [metered?] psalms. We just had those old 'buckwheat' notes then. But when the meter was called some good sister or leader would start off with a certain time in the proper meter.

For the occasion of our church picnic on the Fourth of July, we had no flags and had to make them up out of colored blankets. No body seemed to know for sure whether the stripes were red, white and blue or just white and red. So we made it up with red, white and blue stripes, and since 36 stars were too many to put in we used just one big star.

At that time in those Pioneer days there was very little law and order and the settlers organized vigilance committees. My father was the captain of the [organisation?] in our neighborhood! Horse stealing was worse than murder and crimes against women were about in the same class. They were given their choice of the rope or the whip where it wasn't too serious. But the only trouble with this, they were too hasty to think the accused was guilty and some innocent people might be punished because of man's unreasoning prejudice. Today it is not much different even with [organised?] trial by law. Human prejudice is hard to overcome and if a person is openly accused of a crime, many think they are guilty. It's just the way.

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The cowboys of the day were never what you would call lawless[;?] they were rough and ready and all that and would go into a settlers cabin to stop a while or eat but never would they take a nite more than the prevailing custom allowed them, and which was food, rest, fire and water.

When some one died they were usually buried by a tree or some land mark, an cemetaries were not much in order. I've made many a coffin, out of white soft pine, and lined and decorated it for less than \$6.00. I even made two here in Lincoln or College View for people who were too poor to afford a regular commercial one.

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Out near our homestead on the Beaver I came along one day and where the creek had out into a bank md fat as streams always do in filling and building up their bed, I saw a rough box sticking out of the sand and dirt. It looked rather like It had been there a long time so I got a shovel and dug it out. It was buried six feet or more and was full of dirt which I suppose the mater had washed into its space through a hole. Its contents were a bunch of bones and some rotten cloth and a two edged knife or bayonet nearly four feet long. I reburied the bones and kept the [steel?] (very fine) bayonet. It was to the best of my knowledge, a spaniard who had died here several centuries before. There was some signs that they had stopped here for the winter.

Hastings was the end terminal of the railroad south of the Platte. We used to go there to trade, except cocasional trips to Kearney. Ordinarily we sold all our grain to new settlers for seed and feed but now and then we would take a load to Kearney. One time I would have taken 50 ¢ a bushel for a load of weedy wheat and imagine my surprise when the man offered me 80 ¢ a bushel.

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We bound our grain by hand using the wheat stems for a binders. When we threshed it, we just piled the bundles on the dry ground or flattened logs and drove the horses, or mules around and around over it. Then the straw would be cleaned out and the wheat pitched in the wind to blow the chaff and dirt out. We had plenty of weeds to reckon with and I've seen the time when we wrapped the horses tails in gunny sacks to keep the cockle burrs out of them.

Money was scares and anything we bought with money cost too much. Buffalo hides were only worth a dollar and Beaver skins \$4.00.

Wolves were thick and I went after them with poison. I found the best way was to take saplings, ash was best, cut them about a foot long, sharpen one end and bore or drill a hole in them from the flat end, split a little off one side, fill hole with tallow and then

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drive down in ground so it would stand firmly. Then I would make a ball of tallow and [strychnine?] and place it on top of stake. In setting these out I would rub [asafedita?] an the soles of my boots and drag a dead jack rabbit. This set up a strong trail and the wolves would find and follow it. When they came to a stake, they would eat the ball of [strychnine?] first then stay there and lick at the tallow in the holes In the stake until they died and dropped right there. That way I didn't have to look all over for the dead ones.

I used to pile the caroasses up and when the Indians came alone they would ask about the meat and about 'medicine' meaning poison. They'd take them away and eat them. An Indian would eat anything. The wolves did not have enough poison in them to hurt an Indian.

Well I havent told you all the story but I've got to save something for the other fellow. I've been here in Lincoln 52 years and saw the people grow up and get to this great age when they just want to press buttons.